

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2020

Richard Fordyce
Administrator
Farm Service Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Administrator Fordyce:

The Coronavirus, Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act addresses the economic impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on Americans—including those who are tirelessly working to shore up our nation's food supply. As a part of the CARES Act, \$9.5 billion is allocated to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide direct financial relief to farmers and ranchers with an emphasis on those who supply to local food systems such as farmers' markets and restaurants. We urge you to take immediate steps to address the concerns we are hearing from farmers in our home state of Arizona in accessing these critical funds.

In Arizona, nearly 95 percent of farms are family owned with a large portion of those focused on selling directly to local restaurants and farmers markets. While we understand this is an unprecedented time, we are concerned Arizona family farms are being left behind during this crisis. As you well know, the agriculture community has unique needs when it comes to running their business—they cannot simply turn off the lights and close their doors—and we believe the USDA and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) are best positioned to provide much-needed support during this time.

As a part of that support, on March 26, the FSA announced it would make changes and relax the loan process as well as add flexibilities for servicing emergency loans to farms. Unfortunately, when farmers in Arizona went to their local FSA Service Center, they were unable to receive any information on what these changes mean or how the new program setup would be administered. Many small-to medium-sized farms have never applied to FSA for assistance before and are struggling to navigate the application process while also worrying about keeping their farms afloat. It is crucial that our agriculture community knows the federal government is here for them and that their unique needs are being addressed.

We urge you to work quickly to delegate the funding approved by Congress for our farmers and ranchers, and work with the local FSA Service Centers to ensure they have the resources and tools necessary to administer the intended support for Arizona's agriculture community.

Thank you for your timely consideration and for the work you do to support those who are working tirelessly to feed our country during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress